

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
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S E C R E T CANBERRA 1553

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: EXGDS-3

TAGS: AS, US

SUBJECT: THE ALP'S IRAQI CONNECTION

REF: CANBERRA 1477

1. SUMMARY: IN A MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR HARGROVE AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27, OPPOSITION LEADER WHITLAM SAID THAT IT WAS PROBABLE THAT HE WOULD BE REPLACED AS LEADER OF THE ALP WITHIN A WEEK'S TIME. END SUMMARY

2. WHITLAM EXPLAINED IN GREAT DETAIL HIS AND ALP FEDERAL SECRETARY DAVID COOMBE'S INVOLVEMENT IN EFFORTS TO SECURE FUNDS FROM ARAB SOURCES. THE INITIAL SUGGESTION CAME FROM A LEFTWING LEADER OF THE VICTORIAN ALP, BILL HARTLEY, AND WHITLAM WAS AWARE IT IF FROM THE BEGINNING. WHITLAM ALSO SAID THAT WHILE HE WAS AWARE OF THE EFFORTS TO SECURE FUNDS FROM IRAQ, HE HAD ALSO SUCCEEDED IN RAISING A\$200,000 ON HIS OWN OF WHICH APPROXIMATELY A\$50,000 CAME FROM FOREIGN MINING INTERESTS.

3. WHEN ALP FEDERAL SECRETARY BOB HAWKE HEARD ABOUT THE IRAQI DEAL TWO WEEKS AGO HE HAD QT HIT THE ROOF END QTE. WHITLAM DESCRIBED HAWKE AS A PRO-ISRAELI FANATIC.

4. THE MOST LIKELY OUTCOME NOW WAS THAT THE FEDERAL EXECUTIVE OF THE ALP WILL FORCE COOMBE TO RESIGN AS FEDERAL SECRETARY THEN HE, WHITLAM, WILL RESIGN AS LEADER
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OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ALP ALTHOUGH HE DOES INTEND TO SERVE

OUT HIS PRESENT TERM IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.
WHITLAM SEEMS RESIGNED TO THIS AND SAID HE VERY MUCH
HOPED THAT MHR WILLIAM HAYDEN, THE FORMER TREASURER,
WOULD REPLACE HIM AS THE ALP'S LEADER.

5. COMMENT: WHITLAM'S RESIGNATION UNDER THESE CIRCUM-
STANCES COMPLETELY SHATTERS THE ALP AND SERIOUSLY WEAKENS
THE ALP'S PROSPECTS IN THE FORTHCOMING STATE ELECTIONS
IN NEW SOUTH WALES AND VICTORIA. AS WHITLAM HIMSELF
CORRECTLY NOTED, HAYDEN STILL LACKS THE CONFIDENCE FOR
THE JOB OF ALP LEADER. HE OR ANYONE ELSE WHO SUCCEEDS
WHITLAM WILL HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY HOLDING THE ALP'S
PARLIAMENTARY RANKS IN ORDER.
HARGROVE

SECRET

NNN

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